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ABSTRACT

This study presents first-hand information on aspects of the developmental process during the first five years of life in rural Teyateyaneng in Lesotho, a small country surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Implicit in the study is the assumption that a relationship exists between informal education at home and formal education at school. The data were compiled in structured interview settings with thirty mothers. Using descriptions and narrations, the study examines the influence of taboos, beliefs, indigenous cultural influences, and differences in mothers' educational background on: practices in childbirth, breastfeeding, weaning, birth control, and pregnancy; preferred family size; child sex preference; home births and hospital births; and child care during infancy and the early childhood years. Traditional child rearing practices are described, particularly the socialization of the child into Sesotho (the language of Lesotho) culture and differences in methods used by educated and uneducated mothers. Based upon the data collected, the study hypothesizes that the education of the mother has no substantial influence on the methods of child rearing. This hypothesis may be attributable to the following factors: (1) the present generation of mothers has been reared in homes in which cultural practices were strictly observed by mothers with lower educational backgrounds; (2) the rurality of the Teyateyaneng area is a representative setting for tribal society and for the conscious or unconscious continuity of traditional practices; and (3) the type of education the mothers have had. (DST)

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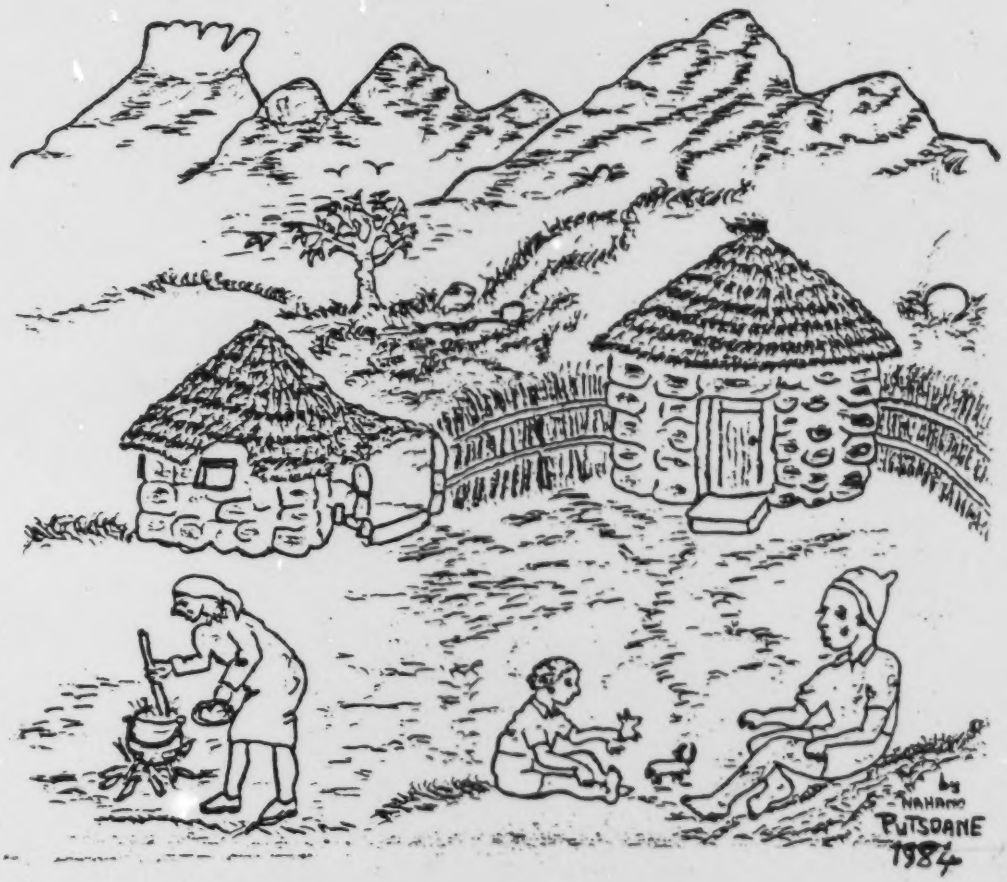
CHILD REARING IN LESOTHO

Some Aspects of Child Rearing in the Teyateyaneng Area



by

EDNA E. BAM

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FOREWORD

It is often remarked that society in Lesotho is in the process of change. All societies change, of course, but because of a complex web of economic, social and geographic factors, Lesotho seems to be changing rather rapidly. Nowhere is this rapid change more noticeable than in the important area of child rearing practices on which, to some extent, the very future of the nation depends.

It is a pleasure, therefore, to welcome Edna E. Bam's book which deals with traditional child rearing practices in the villages around Teyateyaneng. The book is the result of some careful research which Mrs. Bam completed some years ago and should serve to remind all of us of what used to happen to infant Basotho in those days and should serve as a measure of how far child rearing practices have moved in the last decade or so.

Some of Mrs. Bam's colleagues in the Department of Educational Foundations have already found the typescript of this book most useful in planning a study of contemporary child rearing practices and that is one reason why we encouraged her to have the book printed and thus make it available to a wider audience. It should be found useful to sociologists, psychologists, teachers, health workers and all those whose work brings them into contact with children.

It is worth noting that a research paper based on this book and given by Mrs. Bam at the University of East Africa Social Science Conference in 1969 was the first, and is still the only, internationally known study of Basotho children.

Arthur Blair
National University
of Lesotho, ROMA
1984

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in early childhood-growth and development coupled with the realisation that there is a dearth of written information about child rearing practices in the Basotho culture, largely influenced my decision to set myself the task of gathering first hand information, from mothers and grandmothers, in connection with traditional child rearing practices in the first five years.

My thanks are due to the many mothers who were interviewed. Their good humour made the long interviews a pleasurable experience. I am grateful also to 'Me Mathakane Sefeane who helped to identify the homes that were included in this study which was carried out in 1968.

Lastly, I owe special thanks to my husband Mini, for the unfailing support and to Refiloe and Nomvula who kept the home fires burning.

Edna E. Bam
National University
of Lesotho, ROMA

1984

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MAP OF LESOTHO

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Lesotho, a land-locked kingdom which covers 11,716 square miles, is wholly surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. The country rises from an altitude of 5,000 feet above sea-level in the West, to 11,000 feet in the East. Approximately 85% of the country constitutes the highlands and 15%, the lowlands.

According to the 1965 Population Census, there were 976,000 Basotho* of whom 40% were able-bodied men who work as migrant labourers in the farms, industries and mines of the Republic of South Africa. An estimated 85% to 90% of the population engage in some form of agricultural activity. One third of the land that is arable constitutes the major agricultural area. The remaining two-thirds, the highlands, provides grazing for stock. Each household has an allocation of approximately five acres.

Lesotho exports wool, mohair, hides and skins to the Republic of South Africa.

Lesotho has a long interesting history. Two significant events in the history of the country are the coming of the first missionaries in 1833, and the gaining of independence in 1966.

The country has nine districts. Teyateyaneng is the administrative centre of the Berea District.

* The people of Lesotho are known as Basotho and speak a language called Sesotho.

Child, Mother and the Home

It is increasingly being realised that the subject of child development has to play a vital role in determining and developing school curricula that will relate to local conditions and circumstances. A suitable school curriculum, the researchers say, is one that presents learning that the child can perform. The child can perform best at school in situations which are more or less similar to what he has experienced at home and in the community. The experiences of the home often reflect some aspects of the culture. The cultural experiences in turn help to convert the natural capacities of the child into abilities necessary for learning and for survival.

The objective of this study is to present first-hand information on some aspects in the growing up process during the first five years of life in the rural areas of Teyateyaneng. Implicit in the study is the concept that a relationship exists between informal education of the home and formal education of the school.

The data has been compiled in structured interview situations. Interviews with thirty mothers who live within a radius of eight miles from the administrative centre or Camp have been regarded as an adequate sample. The interviews have had, of necessity, to be conducted in an informal way to establish rapport. The interviewer has had, in most cases, to take

the initiative and guide the course of the interview in order to cover the schedule. Ample latitude has been given to subjects, however, to express their own particular sequence of topics. The chief method of collecting information from mothers only may seem a methodological weakness but it is not very serious because a Mosotho mother is, in a way, largely responsible for the care of the child in the first five years of life. Added to this point is the fact that most Basotho fathers are employed in the neighbouring state of South Africa. In my sample of thirty homes, sixty percent of the husbands were away at work (in the Republic of South Africa) at the time of the interview.

For convenience the first two years of life have been treated separately. It remains, however, a part of the whole of the childhood stage. The interviewer nevertheless remained conscious of the fact that direct information is more reliable than that based solely on memory. The sample is weighted with younger mothers but it should be remembered that with larger families, an older woman is often the mother of a young child.

It will be prudent to give, for any specifically mentioned informant, her age. The material will be organised on the basis of the development of educability in terms of an assumption that this development is partly explainable by the first five years of life.

The ages of the subjects range from twenty-two to sixty-six years of age. In two cases, the informants could not give

an accurate date of birth but instead gave an important historical event associated with their birth. 'Ma-Esebia (± 66 years) told me that she was born during the war of the Johnny's (ntoa ea Majoni) i.e. the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

Data on schooling shows that the general level of schooling is not high. A third of my informants are literate in that they reached the fourth standard (six years of primary school education). Less than a third vary between standards one and three. One informant claimed that she had passed the sixth standard. Two of the elderly informants (± 66 years) each claimed they had been to school but could not confirm it by giving the standard attained. A third of the informants have had three years of post-primary education.

The standard of living is evidenced by data on the homes. Two thirds of my informants are housed in one of the following types of structures comprising one room:- a traditional hut; flat (four-walled structure with a flat corrugated iron roof); a hut and a larger thatched building; and finally, a building comprising anything from two to five rooms. Poverty seemed real in Teyateyaneng (home ownership could, in many cases, be achieved at the cost of lower living standards and curtailment of education). The homes which were visited on an impromptu basis were invariably kept neat and tidy.

In all cases the writer had to state the purpose of the visit before interview could be sought. In two instances,

the informant summoned other female members of kin to be present. Sixty-six year-old 'Ma-Esebia had two married daughters and her daughter-in-law with us. Nursing mothers had their infants with them throughout the periods of interview.

Sixty percent of the mothers reported that their husbands worked in the South African mines. Two older mothers were widowed early in their married lives. Each, however, had a large family and had children who qualified **her** for inclusion in the sample of persons to be interviewed.

Socialisation or the process of growing up refers to the process whereby the new-born infant is transformed into the functioning adult. In this thesis, therefore, concern is mainly for the formative influences which impinge on the child during the growing up process in the first five years. These influences may be physical and details of child care are included or they may be instructional i.e. the term will refer to the actions of the mothers as socialising agents and the ideals they have for the child.

I will give a description of 'Mamantŝo, a widow aged about forty-six years with nine children whose ages range from ten months to twenty-seven years. They all live in a small flat together with her aged mother-in-law. The room was simple, neat and tidy. During the interview, she was nursing the infant in a rather 'mechanical' way. A five-year old girl, Motŝelisi, who had come into the room and stood beside her mother was told to go and play outside.

'Mamantŝo seems to have a genuine love for children and, although she was widowed after the birth of the third child, she has since had six more children. She expressed the desire to have more. Her mother-in-law is pleased with each new arrival and she has the sole right to name each child. The old mother-in-law works on the lands and looks after the home because 'Mamantŝo works in the Camp. The grandmother is the caretaker of the infant for the better part of the day. Motŝelisi, the five-year old, helps her when the older girl of twelve years is at school. Help is keeping watch over the infant and running errands.

The first four children were born at home and the rest had been born in the local hospital. The reason my informant gave for the disparity is the fact that the Teyateyaneng hospital was opened in 1951 "when I was breastfeeding Mohlolo".

She told me that she had hardly the time to follow the traditional practice of feeding her infant from her cupped hand. She blames her 'laziness' on the advent of the plastic feeding bottle. As she spoke, the plastic feeding bottle, half-full of thin porridge called lesheleshele had been left near the entrance to the home.

She normally weaned her babies after they had reached the age of three years. Her mother-in-law gives the directive for the weaning of the infant to take place. On the appointed day, the infant is abruptly weaned. She sometimes uses the juice of the small species of the aloe plant (lekhalana) as a deterrent

if the child gives problems of wanting to suckle. At night, she ties a cloth across her breasts to discourage the suckling habit. She admitted that the baby's cries during the weaning time were most heart-rending but that she always gave a substitute food which did not necessarily stop the crying. She told me that despite the bitter traumatic cries, she never relented. Traditional belief is that to yield to the infant's cries for the breast will cause him ill-health. Fear for the health and welfare of an infant is uppermost in the mother's mind.

As the interview continued, the infant fell asleep and my informant rose to go and place her on the grass mat in the quieter corner of the room but on doing so the child whimpered as she put her down. She returned to her seat with the child and again suckled the infant as we continued with our business.

'Mamantŝo's children play in the lane in front of the home mostly making their toys from what is available - small stones, scraps of cloth, plastic material, sand, clay, broken pieces of crockery. She is particular about where they play and the children learn to know that they may only play in front of the house.

Discipline in the home is administered by my informant, her mother-in-law, and the older children. The techniques they adopt are sanctions or reprimand or both. 'Mamantŝo does not advocate or favour the use of the switch (thupa) but stated

that she sometimes does raise her hand only to frighten the child, in instances where the child fails to take heed of more kindly methods. She also makes use of 'bogeys' to instil fear in the children. Bogeys are called koko in Sesotho.

What annoys my informant most, she continued, is "crying for nothing" by a child who can speak and therefore is able to tell what it is that makes her cry. She told me that Motŝelisi, the five-year old girl, often cries for nothing and all she does is to tell her to go and cry far from the home where "I cannot hear her".

From the time when the child is three-years old, 'Mamantŝo uses the imaginary koko to discipline and control her. She genuinely believes that a built-up fear complex at least keeps them aware of danger. Another mortal fear her children have is of lightning - a phenomenon the mother admitted she herself fears. Lightning often strikes (plays) in some part of the countryside with fatal results. Fear of lightning is not uncommon.

Informal training with regard to social norms is given when the children reach the fifth year. The five-year old girl, for example, had already been taught the correct method of sitting and had learnt that the right hand is the correct hand to eat with. She assists in the home as she learns to perform light household chores such as fetching the baby's clothes from where they have been spread on the the grass to dry in the sun. She also runs errands to neighbouring homes. Mother-child

verbal interaction seemed limited because the mother is away at work most of the day and secondly, 'Mamantŝo explained that she does not believe in conversing with the child because the child will become naughty, disobedient and think that they are equals (lithaka).

This portrait may be idiosyncratic to a certain extent but the attitudes expressed do reflect fairly well on the woman of her age group.

CHAPTER 2

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CHILD

The most common attitude has been that of having as many children "as it pleaseth the Creator to grant me". Children are always regarded as a gift and the number is not the special concern of the mother. One mother said "a home is not a home without children". Another mother said to me "the children will look after you when you are old". A third mother said that though children are sometimes troublesome, no home should be without them.

Consequent upon this attitude to having as many children as is possible, the interviewer met no instance where the informant seemed to be aware of birth control practices by modern accepted methods. One informant, 'Ma-Nora (66 years old and has been to school), put it in this way "No mother concerns herself with birth control. The Creator will stop when He has finished". For the mothers in rural areas, life can become a continual round of child bearing with no respite except during the nursing period which can be of two to five years' duration.

It seemed that a compelling feeling of duty to have more children of both sexes existed. Any woman who has reared many children is regarded with open admiration. Elderly mothers would lift up both hands with one or two fingers held down in order to indicate the number of children they have. The given

number includes any deceased child(ren) also. 'Maphoka (42 years) told me, using the present tense, "I have nine children of whom five are alive". An interesting habit which showed itself frequently during the interviews, was when the mother wants to give the sequence of the births of her children, according to their names or sex. With both hands up, fingers fanned, to show the number ten for example, each of the fingers was used in turn and pressed against the bottom lip to show either the name or sex in the birth sequence of the children.

In general, one can say that the impression that was created is that the nursing period can, in a way, be regarded as a form of birth control. Sexual intercourse does not take place during this time. 'Ma-Nora stressed that sexual intercourse during the nursing period has overt effects that are dangerous for the infant that is being breast-fed. He will develop shaky knees and a weak backbone. In addition, he will be dogged by illness, the symptoms of which differ from those of what she termed 'natural' illness. Another elderly informant, 'Ma-Esebia, told me that it is a disgrace for a mother to fall pregnant before she has weaned her baby. Basotho look on such an occurence with disdain. Hence it does not often occur. But, should a mother conceive whilst she nurses an infant, the baby is taken from her and special medicine is administered "to remove the bad milk". No words of ridicule are spared by the elders to make the erring mother aware that "she has weaned the

child on her own and without direction from us the parents" - an event regarded, traditionally, as a sheer disgrace. According to old tradition, in such cases the woman would have to be 'purified' as the conception is regarded as irregular, it was stated.

Preferred Family Size

The mothers' attitude to the question of family size seems to be that the prospect of having many children is entertained generally. 'Mathuso (22 years) who is nursing her first child said that she wanted at least ten children. Only one informant stated that she had more children than she would have preferred. She had wished to have four children. Instead she has eight children. Mothers will go into great expense and inconvenience in order to have children. 'Mathakane (27 years) is a case in point. She has one child and is desperate about having a successor for her. She stated that she has consulted Western-trained medical practitioners, medicine men, herbalists (liepa meru) and has approached religious sects (Masione) who claim that they cure by prayer. So far, her efforts have been fruitless. One informant summarised the general attitude to family size when she said that no person has a right to desire a certain number of children, instead one must be grateful for whatever gift has been received.

It seems that the ideal desire to have many children will change as the family increases and in the end no discrepancy will

exist between the actual number of children desired and the ideal number of children desired. As the child bearing proceeds, therefore, a certain ambivalent feeling might develop to the newest arrival at a time and the later children will be children whose arrival is really not planned for.

Sex Preferences

All of the mothers of child bearing age were asked questions about sex preferences in children. The general finding was that mothers did not care much which sex the expected child turned out to be. One mother naively said that one is grateful for what comes "as long as it is a person". A significant point here was that each of the mothers said she wanted to have a boy as first-born - an heir (mojalefa) and someone to perpetuate the family name - but would hesitate as she spoke, in case she offended the "Great One" (Molimo) by being choosy.

Cravings and Taboos

As soon as a mother has conceived, her in-laws have to be informed. Most mothers carry on normally with their daily domestic chores. No concessions to pregnancy were reported. There is one matter, however, in which all those interviewed, save two, said they indulged themselves and this refers to food-cravings. The cravings varied. Fish, eggs, milk, wild spinach, peaches, oranges, bread and dry beans were mentioned. An explanation might be one of dietary deficiency. The

Basotho diet is mainly carbohydrates and often monotonous. The cravings can in a way become an excuse for indulgence. Most of my informants reported that they drank the herbal mixture called mohlapiso during the waiting period, irrespective of whether they attended hospital clinic or not.

Salient features of the gestation period are the taboos and traditional practices that are associated with the condition. A waiting mother, for example, may not prepare clothing for the coming child. This seemingly pessimistic belief may be summarised in the adage: 'There is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip'. She may not eat meat off a bone because that will cause difficulty during labour. She may not peep into a room but must go right inside. Objection in this instance is based on a fear that the unborn child will develop a tendency to 'peep' and thus complicate labour. Lastly, an expectant mother may not cut her hair. This is particularly so if it is her first pregnancy. She may only have her hair cut three months after the neonate has arrived. When the mother has gone to her parents' home for her confinement, which is usually the case in a first confinement, an animal should be sacrificed on the return to her husband's home after the event and the sacrifice is called koroso or home-coming.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHILD ARRIVES

More than sixty-six percent of the mothers interviewed preferred home confinements to hospital confinements because they reported strong feelings that they would be able to perform traditional practices that are associated with child birth. Five mothers said, individually, that they had to be rushed to hospital because the indigenous midwives in attendance had encountered difficulties. Three other informants reported that they had attended the hospital pre-natal clinic just to make sure that all was well. The actual births took place at their homes.

Attitudes towards hospital births varied. One informant reported that a prevailing feeling towards hospital births is that it was important to attend the pre-natal clinic for some time. But attendance at a clinic meant she would be given supplies of powdered milk and vitamin oils which often cause the foetus to gain weight and result in difficulties during labour.

Three different mothers stated that they had preferred hospital births because it was becoming increasingly difficult to get help during childbirth, as the older women are becoming more reluctant to stand by during confinement. Another mother reported that she had planned to have hospital confinement but labour came on unexpectedly and because of transport problems, she had to be content with the birth taking place at home.

A general practice seems to be to attend pre-natal clinic and at the same time drink the traditional herbal mixture (mohlapiso) on the quiet because it does not allow the foetus to grow and develop too fast. Mohlapiso controls the weight of the foetus and thus ensures normal childbirth.

Hospital Births

A number of mothers reported to me that they had hospital confinements because they had met difficult deliveries or because they had been sickly. This might as well have been due to lack of care taken during pregnancy. Apart from the desire to observe the traditional practices involving childbirth, one encountered the general feeling that hospital confinements are not popular. The current complaints were listed by 'Makutlo, who is a 50-year old teacher. She reported that: mothers-to-be object to the idea of being handled by young unmarried nurses - 'girls' as she called them. Hospital provides a diet that includes items of food that may be taboo e.g. eggs. The nurses are unsympathetic to mothers, especially to those young mothers experiencing their first confinements. Hospital staff object to the use of the traditional ochre and the use of the ox skin maternity garment (worn to keep the foetus warm, especially in a first pregnancy). The sterile hospital atmosphere is strange and cold and mothers cannot relax. One informant told me that she failed to understand how delivery can be successful if mothers are forced to lie on

their backs - a position which did not seem to provide adequate support and was used in hospitals.

It does seem that fear for the hospital medical staff, the birth process and the strange environment all add up to make childbearing in hospital unacceptable. None of the mothers who reported that they had to be rushed to hospital, at some stage of the birth process, lost their babies in spite of their negative attitude in regard to hospital confinements.

One mother who has seven children altogether told me that her fifth child was delivered in hospital because she was a premature baby. She added that she was rushed to the hospital in a semi-conscious state. She then continued to relate with imagination, the 'up and downs' she has had with the health of this particular child. She confidently told me that she is one of those women who could deliver themselves without assistance.

A significant factor regarding hospital confinement is that only two mothers in my sample used financial problems as a reason for not having had hospital confinements. The general impression gathered is that prejudice, fear and adherence to custom concomitant with the birth process, all combine to make hospital births less popular than home births.

Home Births

Data on home births show that preferred assistants in cases of home confinements may be a mother, a mother-in-law and any

elderly but trusted relatives or friends.

The traditionally-accepted position adopted during the birth process requires that the mother kneels on the floor with her knees about twelve inches apart and her heels together. A pad which has been made of her 'maternity' garment, the skin of a red ox or red flannelette, is placed over the heels and she sits on it. Two assistants - one in front and the other at the back - lend support. A salient element here is that of the physical as well as psychological support afforded by the assistants who are invariably close relatives or close friends. The warmth of this assistance is in striking contrast with the strange atmosphere that may be encountered in a hospital labour ward.

One encounters the uninformed belief that child-bearing and childbirth are free from distress among the Basotho people. The facts do not suggest that this is the case. Indigenous midwives are very particular about the expectant mother's behaviour during the birth process. An elderly indigenous midwife of 66 years and who has some school experience said that if the woman in travail screams, she is slapped on the face. The birth process, she continued, must be experienced with dignity and calm. My informant summed it by making the analogy "the woman in travail must be a sheep not a goat!" If the woman screams and in this manner may attract attention of passers-by, goats are chased around the building and hit by women or by an elderly man. The bleating is expected to

drown the noises from the 'labour room'. No explanation could be given why the elderly man became involved.

In cases of prolonged labour, a medicinal mixture containing a piece of the placenta of a horse (kept for such emergencies) is imbibed by the patient. The explanation is that a horse "does not waste time" and its placenta is a rare find. Other herbal mixtures specifically for times like these are also known to be used to hasten labour.

The umbilical cord is severed with a longitudinal section from the internode of a river reed (lehlaka le melang metsing). The place to be cut is determined by measuring the cord against the thigh of the neonate. Butter-fat is used to smear round the navel cord which is normally not tied at any point. This form of treatment continues until it comes off.

It was reported that indigenous midwives know and will practice foolproof methods in cases of afterbirth retention. The following are some: the patient is made to sniff soot or snuff; she is made to blow into a mouth-sized opening in a calabash or into a large wine sized bottle as a substitute; she is given a liquid in which gramophone records have been boiled or; traditionally, in which soot has been stirred, to drink.

The attention that is given the neonate at this point in time is primarily to clear the mucus from his nose and mouth. To get him to utter his first cry, cold corn (mabele) is thrown over his body. The shock makes him cry. He is then wrapped in the traditional maternity garment which his mother had used.

Disposal of the Afterbirth

The afterbirth is disposed of in such a way that will prevent strangers from hurting either the child or its mother, by walking over it. 'Ma-Nora (66 years) told me that custom demands that the afterbirth be buried in an unfrequented place. Hence it may be buried in the room in which the child was born, or in a calm portion of a river for the crabs to 'catch' it. A more recent practice, a result of frequent migration, is to bury the placenta in a remote place in the veld. The early mornings are preferred for the disposal ceremony. It was also reported that the afterbirth is known to be buried in the ash heap (thotobolo) in front of the home. Practices differ according to clans.

A widespread belief in connection with the afterbirth is that a mother who has had a succession of children of one sex and wishes to have a child of the opposite sex, may have her wish fulfilled by having the afterbirth turned inside out by her sister-in-law and then disposed of in that inside-out position in the usual manner.

The Veil or Hood

In cases where a neonate is born encased in a membranous 'bag', the traditional practice is that the veil is cleaned and dried in a secluded place. It is kept for the infant and it is regarded as a lucky charm (mokubetso). Bits of it are used in powdered form to bring luck in any important undertaking,

throughout his life. 'Mantŝaba (teacher aged 38 years), told me that she was a veiled baby and that her mother has not preserved the veil for her. Since she is a person who suffers poor health, many older people have blamed her for not making use of her charm (mokubetso).

Disposal of the Navel Cord

Mother and neonate are confined to the hut until the navel string dries and falls off. The navel cord is disposed of in various ways. It may be burned or buried, depending on the practices of the particular clan. One informant told me that it is burned with bits of leaves and grass near the entrance, on the inside of the hut. The mother (motsoetsi) has to step over the burning fire twice. The ash from the fire is used as an ingredient for the special medicine (mothaleho) that will be used to make the cross on the head of the child to protect him against evil spirits. Another informant reported that the navel cord is buried in the hut, furthest from the door. A hole is made with a peg and it is thrown into the opening and securely covered and disguised with soil.

Birth Announcement

According to Sesotho custom, the birth of a boy is announced by beating the father with a stick - the symbol of manhood. The birth of a girl is shown by drenching the father with water - the symbol of womanhood. To make the birth known to the

general public, two reeds are inserted into the thatch so as to protrude visibly. In cases where the home has an iron roof, a rope is suspended from the roof and pegged to the ground. The purpose of this symbolic announcement is two-fold: (i) to announce the birth of the infant; (ii) to warn persons, other than close female relatives and friends, not to enter the precincts of the home. The second purpose does not create bad feeling and is accepted with grace.

Mother and child are confined to the house for about three months. The removal of the one reed indicates that the mother is free to go out of the hut. The removal of the second reed shows that the baby is also out of confinement of the house. Strict taboo, however, relates to the father of the baby who, according to old custom is not allowed to see the baby before the three months of confinement are over. He has to keep distant because he may be a 'carrier' of charms harmful to the child. Since his movements are not restricted to the home, it is feared that he contacts many different people and crosses many frequented paths and trails (mehlala) and is therefore likely to transmit strong charms and medicines of malevolent persons that will have a 'weighting down' effect on the infant. It was reported that more recent practice however has at least made concession for the father to see the child once after its birth and thence to keep distant, for reasons already explained.

Helpers

Women neighbours in the village show their goodwill by giving practical help with the household chores. They fetch water, grind grain, collect wood for the use of the nursing mother (motsoetsi). It was reported that they may also make contributions in cash or kind. Such helpers may, however, not enter the hut where mother and child are kept. They may ask about the health of the twosome from the midwives who take care of them.

First Child (Letsibolo)

The birth of the first child is socially significant.

(1) His birth, by tradition should take place at his maternal grandparents' Home.

(2) Strict rites and taboos related to his birth are observed. These practices are relaxed for the birth of subsequent children.

(3) He belongs, by tradition, to his paternal grandparents.

(4) He is the first child to wear the neckband (khoeetsa) that was made for, and worn by his mother and which is regarded as a lucky charm. (The khoeetsa is made from the skin of a red ox that has to be slaughtered by the pregnant mother's people when she arrives at her home when about eight months pregnant).

(5) He is named by both his paternal and maternal grandparents. Subsequent children are not necessarily named by

grandparents on both sides.

(6) Any custom that concerns the infant and that the clan wishes to discontinue may only be ended at a ceremonial feast during the infancy of the first child.

(7) His birth alters his mother's status in the home.

(8) A beast is sacrificed on the first-born infant's home-coming (koroso).

Special Names Given to a Child

Mention must be made of the naming of a child who is born after the death of a previous male child or children. Death of infants is almost always associated with sorcery and special precautions are taken against it. Such a child is traditionally known as 'Ntjanyana' meaning a small dog. He is safeguarded against malevolent persons and witches by making a show of neglecting him in the hope of foxing them, and thus lulling them from their evil vigilance over the child. Unpleasant names are given to such children e.g. Masepatsana (little human waste) Tŝoene (monkey), Manyala (excretion), Mosela-ntja (tail of a dog) and so on. It is believed that the witches hover over and around the house in the night and when they hear such names called out, they will in their folly not associate those names with real children and in that way the child will be spared.

As further safeguards such a child - a boy especially - is named and dressed as a girl in a thetana (a beaded leafy panti-skirt). He is weaned before the traditional two-year minimum

period has expired, usually at one-and-a-half years. He may be separated from his mother after he has been weaned and sent to live with relatives - out of harm's way.

To return to the naming of the new baby, young mothers told me they do not often take the initiative in choosing the baby's name although they have the prerogative to name subsequent children. They wait until an older relation suggests a name, usually a family name which they accept. Family names cannot be called out by the daughter-in-law (ho hlompha). The result is that she has to find a 'pet' name to use. Family links are kept alive and wider kinship links are reinforced by the names. One educated mother told me that they have a mutual arrangement, by which her parents-in-law provide the Sesotho names for the new babies and she and her husband are responsible for the English names. Her eldest son has two Scottish names. Another mother reported that their little boy was named Mpho by them. They had been away from Lesotho for some five years. On their return to the country in 1960, the little boy who was two-and-a-half years old, had his registered name of Mpho changed to a family name because his paternal grandparents felt that the family name had to be carried on. Mpho was not a name in the family.

Thanks-offering Ceremony

All my informants mentioned the traditional thanksgiving ceremony for the baby which they strictly observe. It is still

the practice to sacrifice a beast for such ceremonies. By tradition, different clans slaughter either a sheep or an ox. Sekese, a noted authority on Sesotho customs, states that certain Basotho clans are known to sacrifice goats only. Another noted authority on Sesotho customs has written: "At the birth of the child the father offered another sheep by virtue of which he took formal possession of the child and placed it under the special protection of the family gods. On the recovery of the mother he again had to offer a sheep, the skin of which the mother would carry the infant on her back".

It was reported that no Mosotho would be disposed toward discontinuing this particular ceremony. Poor people who could not afford a beast would rather slaughter a chicken as long as the principle that "blood must flow" is adhered to, as 'Manapo (teacher aged 60 years) aptly put it.

I have data which presents a rather confusing pattern as to the explanations that were given for having the thanksgiving ceremony, also known as pitiki. The less educated mothers told me that pitiki was a ceremony intended to give a 'thank you' to the midwives and other women who have given practical help - in service, or in kind. 'Masejane, who is educated and 35 years old, however told me that pitiki is a feast held to show gratitude to all helpers when the child is two or three months old. A sheep is slaughtered for the occasion and beer is brewed. The menfolk (most of whom would have helped with the chopping of wood) hold their celebration a distance from the

house. The womenfolk sing and dance in the room in which mother and infant sojourn. Their dancing often becomes frantic, she told me. Unprintable language is used in the course of the dancing as parts of the body are exposed. No explanation could be given to me for this form of behaviour. My conjecture is that this unusual behaviour by the women may in fact be the direct effects of the beady brew they have imbibed. The infant is taken by one of them and rolled (pitikisoa) on the ground in the courtyard. Another version given by 'Mathabo (who is 64 years old) was that the pitiki ceremonial feast is a feast intended to offer thanks to God "for the gift of a person". She strenuously denied that families in the Teyateyaneng area still attached the original traditional meaning to the feast and she referred to such feasts as "practices of heathendom".

Sekese has written that the custom of thanks-offering is in keeping with the progress that was evident in the early fifties. It is general belief that failure to welcome the baby by offering thanks in the traditional way, will result in the infant crying frequently and for ever disturbing his mother with his cries.

One of the informants, a teacher, stated unequivocally that, as Basotho mothers have unreasoning fear for the safety of their infants, she wondered if acculturation or education or religion could ever change Basotho attitudes in regard to child-rearing patterns. No reference was made in connection with likely changes that national independence will bring.

CHAPTER 4

INFANCY - THE FIRST TWO YEARS

Physical Care

The health and the survival of the child are of primary concern during the period between birth and weaning - a period which is generally characterised as infancy. No effort is spared to satisfy the physical needs of the child at this stage. Traditional practices all point to inherent fears for the safety of the infant. The greatest fear is associated with illness and misfortune which could befall the infant as a result of contact with 'bad' paths of malevolent persons or because of disregard for Sesotho traditional practices that concern the infant. Ellenberger has written "of all the evils which might befall, there was none of which the early Mosuto had a greater dread than witchcraft. Infants wore charms to protect them from sickness and all evils and to make them grow". In the interview with 'Maphoka (aged 42 years), she emphasised that "people bewitch and one has to be careful".

Ninety percent of my informants reported that they dreaded the illness known as hlohoana - a form of meningitis - and which is known to be fatal to infants. Hlohoana is an illness traditionally associated with the 'heaviness of trails and medicines of malevolent persons'. For this reason, no known precautionary measure is spared to prevent the child from malignant persons and their influences. From the first day of his

life the infant is involved in traditional practices by which he may have to be scarified or be exposed to the elements or be marked on the forehead with medicated ointments. Added to these measures, the infant to whose needs a great amount of attention is paid, receives very little or no rigid training. The first two years are for the infant a period of indulgence during which he is treated with 'kindly permissive regimen'. Ashton has stated that for the first few months, the child seems scarcely controlled at all and has his own way almost entirely. Whenever he cries, as he does frequently, his mother immediately responds. A bouquet for the Mosotho mother lies in Ashton's words "her patience and forbearance are astounding". The words of the Levines summarises this period as "the greatest amount of attention is paid to the infant's needs and the least effort is directed to their training".

An attempt will be made to illustrate the traditional practices and observances that involve the infant and concern his ultimate well-being. It should be stated that more than eighty percent of my informants mentioned the practices that follow. They invariably cited them in the present tense.

The first nourishment for the new infant is a light sorghum gruel called motoho. It has to be administered by a woman whose husband is living in the home with her. She comes very early in the morning whilst the village is asleep. She then feeds the gruel to the infant from an unwashed, cupped hand - lelomolo. The significant point here is that she must not

cleanse her hands before the operation. The explanation is that the infant is thenceforth 'innoculated' against any malignant effects that any woman of doubtful virtue may have on him if or whenever she enters the building in which the baby and his mother sojourn. Failure to observe the custom will cause the infant to bring up mother's milk through his nostrils, it was reported.

On the first evening of his life, he is carried round the home once and then taken along the footpath to a place where two or more paths or roads intersect. The soil from the intersection is dabbed on the finger of the woman who carries him and she makes a cross mark (mothaleho) on his head - from back of head to forehead and then from ear to ear. This exercise is intended to fortify or strengthen the child against being 'weighted down' by the strong medicines and evil magical influences of strangers and malevolent persons.

When the navel cord has dropped, the infant's head is shaved. The hair is moistened with breast milk and is then buried at a place at the base of the reeds which form an enclosure in front of the hut - seotloana. The infant is then incised or scarified above the ears, at the back of the head and on the forehead. Blood from the incisions is smeared over the eyes to immunise him against an eye ailment called pomponyane.

Different treatment is accorded to an "ntja"-infant. For him a tuft of hair at the back of his head must remain. Other

clans shave the front part of the head leaving the hair at the back to grow normally. Such hair may only be cut when the infant is weaned. The barber must, by tradition, be the maternal uncle.

Different methods of disposing of the navel string were reported. 'Mathabiso (35 years) stated that in their custom, they burnt it in the hut nearest the entrance. The ash is rubbed into the incisions or scarifications on the child. It must be mentioned that when incisions have been made, protective medicine is rubbed into them. The practice is regarded as a form of immunisation against sorcery.

Another informant mentioned that the navel string is buried in a round hole (made with a peg) in the hut behind the door. The floor of the hut is then smeared with mud to 'disguise' the places where the afterbirth and the navel string have been buried. The main fear is for malevolent persons. The period when the navel cord drops is the first vital stage in the infant's life and practices at this time are regarded as a form of initiation.

The infant is given the charm for good luck. The neckband (khoeetsa) that he will use until he is weaned, is the same that his mother used in the last two or three months of her first pregnancy. It is specially made at her own home from the skin of an animal that was slaughtered to mark the purpose of her home-coming and also to provide her with a maternity garment. The neckband is smeared with an ointment of butter-fat and red

ochre. Charms are stitched on to the khoeetsa with the sinew (lesika) as the thread. The commonly used charms are: the foot of a polecat or a tuft from its tail; a pumpkin pip; a number of beads of a red, blue or white colour. The neckband is treated as an heirloom and passes from the eldest child down to the other children as they arrive. Should it break before the infant is weaned, its use by that particular infant has to be discontinued.

The second and third months are salient periods in the infant's life. He is put through various rites meant to safeguard him. This period is known as kuruetso.

To safeguard him against developing squint eyes he has, at two months of age, to be made to look at a full moon. The person who holds him out has to say "Ku-ru-u-u-u-u Look! there is your equal" (the moon). At about this period, the infant has also to be held out when the first strong rains fall and this practice is intended to prevent any tendencies in the foreseeable future, of developing into a thief.

Different informants reported that they always fortify their infants before they start on a journey. The traditional way of 'strengthening' the infant against persons that he might come into contact with, is to make a medicated mark on his forehead (mothaleho or mohato). Soil from any crossroad is also known to be used for the same purpose. A more sophisticated version of this practice is for the mother to dab a finger over the wheel of the vehicle in which they will travel and use the dust

to mark the infant on the forehead. Grease or oil from the vehicle is also commonly used instead of the dust. 'Mapula, aged 33 years, mentioned a more modern practice which she herself has adopted. She buys stuip-druppels (convulsion drops) from the chemist and this Dutch medicine is believed to serve the purpose just as well. This precautionary measure is meant basically, to safeguard the child against malevolent persons or persons who themselves use self-strengthening medicines. The subsequent illnesses that are feared most in such instances are convulsions and the sag of the fontanelle (Meningitis).

An infant who, according to his mother's estimation, takes rather long to learn to walk, has to be taken to the cattle kraal and is held above the entrance to it by a maternal uncle who then asks rhetorically "Why are you bashful?"

A small percentage of my informants rear their infants without the help of child-nurses or adult caretakers. A striking example is that of 'Mafusi, who is 30 years old. She rears her twins of one-and-a-half years, single-handed. She explained that when she has to fetch water she straps the one to her back and holds the other in her arms. Only when she has to take them to the doctor does she ask any sympathetic neighbour to assist in their transport.

Women Visitors: The Limitations

The following examples which cannot be claimed to be exhaustive, illustrate the traditional practice regarding visitors to the

home of the mother and the neonate. Only close friends and relatives are expected to visit the pair in any event.

A visitor who suffers monthly menstrual pains is expected to make it known by making a mixture of water sprinkled with ash from the hearth, for the nursing mother to drink. This rite is reported to safeguard the nursing mother from after-birth pains.

A visitor who is in mourning must, on entering the hut, take the baby on her lap after its mother has fed it from one breast and then added a kiss. She stretches each of the child's finger joints singly. The baby is handed back to his mother for a suckle from the other breast and again a kiss. The visitor in mourning, receives him on her lap a second time and continues with the stretching of the joints in the toes followed by a massage of the back. This practice is meant to keep ill-luck (sesila) from the infant at all times.

A visitor who is menstruating at the time of the visit must make it known so that the neonate may be laid on the floor for her to step over him twice. If this practice is not observed, it is believed that the infant will develop rash all over his body.

A stranger from a neighbouring village can only enter the hut after she has warmed her feet in the flames of a fire outside the hut made of dry leaves, grass and odd bits. The explanation that was given is that she has crossed the trails of evil medicines and these will have adverse effects on the well- being of the infant.

Feeding

All mothers were questioned as to the way they feed their infants. They all attempt and desired adequate breast-feeding and most of them succeeded.

Almost immediately after birth, before being suckled, the neonate born at home is given a little gruel (motoho) of uncooked sorghum from a cupped hand (lelomolo). 'Ma-Nora (66 years) spared no words to impress that babies who are fed on this supplementary motoho grow strong, heavy and healthy.

All informants of child-bearing age reported that they followed the traditional practice of breast-feeding on demand. Demand feeding entails no feeding schedule hence the infant is fed if and when he cries. Ashton's words in connection with demand feeding are: "Meal-times are irregular and the child is fed only when he cries ..... This casual and passive treatment which consists almost entirely of responding to the child's demands rather than regulating controlling or anticipating them .... is summarised by the proverb 'the child that does not cry dies in the cradle'."

In one case, a nursing mother who is an active teacher, reports that she feeds her two-month old infant on demand but has had to adapt herself to the baby's rhythms. She finds it easier to feed him when he wants to be fed rather than force him into a pattern.

Motoho (sorghum gruel) for night feeding is ingeniously kept warm in a tiny calabash nestled in a specially-made sheep-skin bag. All mothers confirmed that they strictly observed the traditional practice of being seated when the infant has to be nursed.

The length of time that babies are breast-fed, according to custom, ranges from two years to three years ten months. An exception to the minimum of two years of breast-feeding is observed with ntjanyana infant (born after death and before weaning of a predecessor). Such a child is breast fed for one-and-a-half years because "the breast is not his but really belongs to the older infant who died before he was weaned. This behaviour is all part of a general show of neglect in the rearing of such a child.

In the traditional setting, the family norm is that a mother-in-law or a surrogate determines when the breast-feeding should be discontinued. Deterioration in the quality of the mother's milk is not usually considered to be a worthy reason for weaning.

Breast-feeding is an indirect form of birth control. Most of the informants reported with trepidation that they should not yield to co-habitation whilst they nursed their infants. The belief is that the overt effects on the infant are a general loss of condition and a notable weakening of joints. One elderly informant emphasised the point that there is a marked difference between infant illness which is attributed to natural

causes and illness which is a consequence of sexual indulgence. Should a nursing mother conceive before her infant has been weaned traditionally, she will be accused of having weaned the infant on her own volition. To have over-stepped the authority of a mother-in-law or a surrogate is regarded as disgraceful conduct and something to be ashamed of. 'Mamphuthi (65 years) said that harsh words and ridicule are used to reprimand the erring mother. Special Sesotho medicines are however available and are given to the infant to "remove all the bad milk".

From the time of his birth, the Mosotho neonate gets supplementary food in the nature of a sorghum gruel (motoho). As he grows older, he may be introduced to other liquid foods which still supplement breast-feeding. The commonly used foods are cow's milk and liquid porridge (lesheleshele). Special importance is attached to the type of milk that is fed to the infant and to the person that milks the cow. The practice is that a chaste, exemplary boy is appointed as the only one to milk the cow which also must be having a first calf of not more than one-year old.

At one year of age, the Mosotho infant has to be inducted to the traditional solid foods - stiff porridge, meat and wild spinach.(ho jesoa). An animal is slaughtered. Affluent families slaughter sheep and the poor families may slaughter a fowl. Again the adherence to the principle that 'blood must flow' is the important factor here. An outstanding person, known and trusted by the family, is invited to the home concerned.

His duty is to chew and soften the meat from the sacrificial beast and give it to the infant to eat. One informant stated that the meat has to be spat on by the person concerned.
If the infant is a girl, an outstanding mother will be asked to enact the part. The purpose for this practice is to give official licence for the child to eat solid foods. In addition, the belief is that the infant's future character will be influenced by the outstanding character of the person who has formerly introduced him to solid foods.
The early feeding picture is one in which the infant apparently suffers no trauma. Feeding is the first response that is made to infantile crying. An older infant may be frightened by calling to some person, animal or bogey. The general attitude of informants is that a crying infant has to be pacified by breast feeding. Cries of hunger or pain or anger may be differentiated and all are 'cured with the breast'. Demand breast-feeding develops a physiological as well as psychological significance and informants stated categorically that this is good for the child.
Suckling becomes a "Janus-like" habit. The infant suckles to subdue his hunger or because he is disturbed or both. The habit is therefore nutritional as well as emotional. Hence any Mosotho mother who allows her baby to cry for more than a few minutes is generally regarded as being heartless and she may be admonished on the spot for her neglect of the child by even a complete stranger nearby. No offence is attached to such reproof.

Constipation in the infant is relieved by using an old traditional technique which is to administer an enema consisting of a herbal solution with the internode of a river reed. After the age of three the treatment is no longer used.

Toilet Training

Toilet training in the Western sense is not known and no regularity is associated with sphincter control and no attempt is made to effect it. However, during the three months period of seclusion after birth, a grass mat is spread over dry cattle dung which is meant to absorb the infant's discharges. The mass is collected and disposed of. A significant point is that the stale dung is occasionally replaced but the grass mat remains the same despite the wear and tear. As the child grows and his back becomes stronger, he is held out over the bare floor so that "he does not mess me". Dry sand or dung is spread over the mess before it is collected and disposed of. In no instance was mention made of the traditional clay chamber pot. Only the elderly informants recalled it. The toddler is taught to go out of the hut to relieve himself.
The acculturated mothers reported that they used enamel chamber pots for their infants at night only. In reply to the question whether she toilet-trained her infants or not, 'Mapulane, who is 33 years old, replied "'Me, my infants use napkins".

Caretakers

The infant's intensive relationship is with his mother. During much of the day, however, when the mother is working in the house or in the fields, he may be cared for by a child nurse. The age at which a child-nurse is favoured was reported to be eight years or more when she can be entrusted with preparing his food, feeding him, carrying him on her back, lulling him to sleep and with safeguarding him from danger. She goes about with him on her back. Caretakers are not expected to inflict physical punishment on their charges as a form of control. They, however, make full use of the habit of frightening them by calling an animal in sight in order to silence them. A child is, in any case, conditioned to respond in this manner by his mother or grandmother who not only believe it to be a good way of safeguarding him from danger, but also of keeping him subject to control.

In a sample of fourteen mothers who had infants under the age of two years, eight used adult caretakers, five had older siblings to assist and only one, a mother of twins, claimed that she was rearing them herself because "my older children live with my mother". The traditional pattern of mothers using their sisters' or their husbands' sisters for their first and second children is, however, more common than the sample indicates.

Sleeping Arrangements

It was reported that mothers sleep with their infants. In cases where a mother has had her first child, a close relative who helped at the birth, might sleep with the new infant in the first week or so to give the mother rest. Infants are suckled at some time or other during the night. The infant is expected to sleep beside his mother until the next child arrives.

Social Environment

For the first two years of his life, the child lives in a very permissive environment, cared for by a number of people who grant him his every wish and pet him to his heart's content. He is, in the main, the focus of his mother's attention as long as he is the baby of the family. It is from the comfort and security of the contacts he has with his mother's body - either on her back, in her arms, or lying beside her - that he forms his relationships, first, with the members of the household and, later, with the outside world. He is not expected to cry for a long time without receiving comfort. Crying by him is often stopped by suckling him or by the caretaker who ostensibly punishes by hitting the ground or any other inanimate object with which he has hurt himself.

If visitors come to the home, the older children are sent outside to play but the infant and breast-fed toddler are treated with leniency. Two different five-year old girls, Motselisi

and also Moitumi, are examples of children who were each told to go outside to play while three-year old Tlalane had to be carried out of the room thrice while interview with their respective mothers took place. A five-year old boy, Mohlomi, played quietly in the room, whilst Thabiso, also five, sat quietly beside his mother (who is confined to the hut with a two-month old infant) right through the interview.

An interesting situation was created by identical twin girls, Thakane and Thakanyane, aged one year two months. During interview with their mother, 'Mafusi who is 30 years old, they toddled about the room. The older twin, Thakane, who seemed more bashful than Thakanyane, on the other hand, came close to look at the writer's red-coloured ballpoint pen and the aloe bag and other items. Eventually their paths crossed. They handled each other, in what at first seemed a friendly embrace but which later turned out to be an assault on the younger twin by the older. The victim cried. Their mother remarked "she is biting her". The attacker was taken on to the mother's lap and the victim went to sit beside the mother. Special mention should be made of the Sesotho method of assessing the age and status of twins. The one that is born first is regarded as the younger and vice versa. The concept as explained, is that the twin that is born first was conceived last and the one who is born second, and therefore older, was in fact conceived first. Another culture-oriented explanation was that the one who was

born first was the younger one because he was sent by the older.

In summary, the picture of the Mosotho child's first two years of life can be ended by reviewing briefly the salient features. This period may be regarded as a period of golden love. Wherever the infant is, he is the centre of attention. His mother takes him with her to all social events and it is not unusual for him to be passed from hand to hand to be cuddled. He is never far from the comfort of a soothing voice and the enveloping arms of mother, grandmother, aunt, other siblings or even a trusted visitor. Whilst he is at the breast-feeding stage, he and his mother may not spend a night apart according to the traditional pattern. When he is hungry he makes it known by crying and he is immediately breast-fed. He is urged to excrete at particular times or particular places.

The infant's social environment is indulgent, permissive and entirely affectionate. The affection lavished on him, however, does not have to be firm. The infant is given priority over other siblings. He should have no reason to cry at all and the mother is always at the ready to pacify him and for him it eventually also provides emotional balm. Ashton has written: "The Basuto do not try to train their babies, as they assume that they have insufficient intelligence at that age to respond. They also consider that the child himself is really the best judge of when he needs attention and that he will not hesitate to use the weapon nature has provided - crying - to get such attention.".

In the words of the Levines, it may be stated that: "The general picture of the African child as he emerges from infancy is that of a dependent, fearful individual, capable of making demands on his mother and other caretakers for food and protection but unaggressive, quiet, timid in his approach to the physical environment and to strange things."

CHAPTER 5

CHILDHOOD: TWO TO FIVE YEARS

Weaning

Weaning is the first drastic change that the Mosotho child has to face. Other such changes are the rejection period that follows weaning, the birth of a sibling and replacement in the mother's attention by the new sibling.

Traditionally, the age of weaning varies from two years to three years ten months. The exception is the 'neglected' infant, born after many have died. He is weaned at one-and-a-half years. A mother-in-law or surrogate is an important factor at this stage. She has the right to determine when the first-born infant should be weaned. It may not be quite the same with subsequent infants. In addition, she has to be satisfied that the daughter-in-law's breasts have 'dried up' before marital relations may be resumed. 'Mathabang (42 years) reported that at least two months elapsed between the day of weaning and the day on which normal marital relations are resumed. The period from birth to weaning is traditionally regarded as a form of birth control.

The reasons for weaning are widely accepted as: (1) A pregnant mother's milk is harmful for the baby; (2) Time has come for an infant to get a younger brother or sister.

Weaning is a hard experience for the infant in the Sesotho set up. Weaning is abrupt and the estimated time for its onset and

completion is one day, it was reported. The process is accompanied with deterrents and/or separation of the infant from its natural mother. Castle states that "weaning is the first crisis of a child's life".

Informants mentioned various deterrents. Aloe juice (lekhalana), and red pepper smeared over and around the nipples were mentioned most. Two informants mentioned dagga or hemp. Other deterrents involve wearing a garment at hight that will prevent access to the breasts, ignoring the infant's cries, substituting solid foods to deflect his mind from the breast. One informant reported the use of light-hearted ridicule by persons that are around when the infant runs to his mother for a suckle. Two informants used threats to frighten the child away from the breast. Another method is to tell him that bitter substances were on the breast although this is not true. Another informant said that when the child cried for the breast, she puts him on her back and lulls him to sleep. A commonly used practice with first-borns is to separate the child from its mother. He is sent to live with a grandmother or surrogate in order that he may forget his mother.

Most informants confirmed that the traumatic cries of their infants at this crucial time are heartrending. It is, however, most unusual for any mother to relent and suckle the child because of the existing belief that to do so would cause the child illness. 'Manapo stated that 'soft-hearted' mothers sometimes add matekoane (dagga or hemp) to the food that is

offered as a substitute. This treatment has a narcotic effect on the infants and such mothers are thus spared, temporarily, from hearing the soulful cries. It is also intended to alleviate the child's suffering.

It is doubtful whether substitute foods, meant to appease the child, do in fact allay the likely frustration of the child's desire for the close physical relationship of nursing, especially at night.

Rejection

The relationship between mother and child begins to change drastically after weaning. Detachment from the breast is associated with a general policy of withdrawing attention by the mother. To begin with, discipline is not severe on him because he is still regarded as not having the intelligence to understand. The seeming loss of mother affection does not necessarily make her casual and capricious in her treatment of him.

Some illustration of the rejection situation might suffice. Before interview with 'Mapulane (33 years old) began, her daughters of two-and-a-half and five years were in the room with us. The older child was told to take the younger one along with her and to go and play outside. This they did do and the door was shut behind them. Soon after, two-year old Tlalane re-entered the room. Her mother became restless and eventually carried her out. This was not the end of the matter,

for, the child repeated this performance twice more and the mother reacted the same way twice. In the end, the mother went with the child and instructed the caretaker to give Tlalane her 'bottle'. For the fourth time she re-entered the room, and she was suckling from her feeding bottle. This time she was allowed to lean against her mother as we continued to talk. Tlalane fell asleep as she leaned and she was carried out a last time. At no time did the mother talk or reason with the child about her expectation.

In the case of Montŝeng, a four-and-a-half year-old girl, her mother who was nursing her nine-month old brother, gently told her to go and play outside, which she did.

As the post-weaned child learns to grow independent of his mother, he turns to spend most of his time with the child-nurse or with other siblings and playmates. Basotho infants are accustomed to a supplementary food long before weaning and any disturbance that may occur may be attributable to a certain degree of emotional abandonment by the mothers. The break of physical contact with the mother may be more a break of an emotional habit than a break of a nutritional habit. The suffering should be intense in cases of late weaning. Traditionally, the post-weaning period may mean for the child emotional deprivation or physical separation or both. Two noted authorities on mother-child relationships, have written: "It would seem that the child's response to separation, as a representative potential trauma, is a complex process,

influenced by its nature and duration, the quality of mothering before and after the experience, the age and stage of development of the child and the emotional conflicts with which he is principally dealing". In the Sesotho set up, the rejection period is one of seemingly rough and abrupt transition from infantile dependency behaviour to new behaviour patterns. The effect on the child, especially when another neonate replaces him, can only be speculated on. The most obvious guess is that jealousy and hatred may be engendered in the child and that only traditional family control may prevent it from being openly expressed.

Three informants reported that they had post-weaned children living with relatives in other Lesotho districts. The reasons that were given for allowing this separation were all related to tradition. In these cases, the rejection that is being experienced by the child is complete, unlike the incomplete rejection in cases where the child is made to stay away from his mother but still lives with her under the same roof. In a monograph on "Material care and mental health", J. Bowlby's findings are that prolonged deprivation of the young child of maternal care may have grave and far-reaching effects on his character and so on the whole of his future life.

Different treatment is meted to the post-weaned child if he happens to be the baby of the family. He will be treated with greater leniency by his indulgent mother for a reason that was not known to the informants.

Data that has been gathered on the after-effects of the abrupt weaning practice contribute to the supposition that the child's need for love and for security becomes shaken. Early mother indulgence followed by emotional rejection may lead to the child developing a feeling of counter-rejection to adults and, on the other hand, the experience may promote early adaptation to mother-substitute figures.

Transmission of Social Norms

Mother-child relationships after weaning are largely limited owing to the mother's involvement in her domestic chores, her contributions to the family food supply, and perhaps the needs of the neonate. The child, in the end, learns from older siblings, caretakers, playmates and other adults.

Two informants reported that they teach their children to respect older persons, to eat with the right hand, to use two hands cupped to receive anything, plus curtseying and the proper way for a girl to sit. Two-thirds of the mothers confessed that what annoyed them most in a child of two to five years was the 'crying for nothing' as they put it. Reactions to such behaviour was either to ignore him or send him out of the house.

Most informants confirmed that they did not encourage a child to ask too many questions. 'Maphoka said that one begins to answer with patience but before long, one has to chide the child for being troublesome. Praise is rare because of the

general belief that it makes a child "rude and disobedient". On the whole, mother-child relations at this stage of the child's life seem insufficient and may be regarded as significant antecedents in subsequent personality development. The key concepts in the newer dynamic psychology are that "poor mental health arises from processes stemming from faulty interaction with parents".

Language Development

All informants, except for one, stated that they talk in a natural voice to the infant when he begins to use the Sesotho language, so that he may learn to know the correct sounds. One mother, 'Malibuseng (25 years old), was the only informant who confessed that she gets tempted to use the intelligible baby talk and gibberish that her infants use.

Language development for the child is limited to correct grammatical speech. He is helped along by slowly repeating phrases for him to imitate. The first words he learns to call are those relating to names of kin. Incorrect responses may cause good-natured amusement but the correct form of speech is always given with patience in the end. Some mothers reported that certain words used by the child in his learning of the language have been adopted as part of the household vocabulary.

Discipline Techniques

Punishment

The mother is, by tradition, regarded as the main authority for the discipline of the pre-school child. Most mothers admitted that they only handled a switch to frighten the child if repeated scolding for the same misdemeanour fails to have effect. Threats of force are made but are not meant to be carried out. Harshness is not often employed and a child is rarely shouted at. 'Ma-Nora (66 years old) said that a five-year old is disciplined by scolding only. If or when he has to be frightened, the switch is placed lightly against his body. The general attitude in regard to physical punishment in the first five years is that the child's intelligence is not fully developed to merit such treatment.

Emphasis in Sesotho culture stresses that the child show politeness and respect for his elders and for visitors. Any form of disrespect is viewed with great trepidation.

Fears, fantasies and bogeys

The majority of informants disciplined their children by making use of a variety of bogeys to direct them into good behaviour. A common way is to quieten the child by frightening him with an unseen or known animal or person e.g. a policeman, any man, or a European. The use of koko, a monstrous thing, is also a common weapon. The calling of the bogey is intended to make the child believe that he will suffer harm if he does not stop

his misdemeanour.

Fear training begins early in a child's life - even before he can speak. The infant is, in fact, prepared to respond favourably by his mother or his caretaker who may call out to somebody or something invisible to come and take him or eat him or put him in a bag because he is troublesome. In this connection, the writer had occasion recently to witness a dramatic incident which acts as an interesting example. The setting was the verandah of a busy local grocery store. A little girl of about five years stood and screamed. She seemed afraid to enter the shop after her mother, who was carrying an infant on her back. Her mother summoned her to follow. The little girl continued to cry nervously as she looked helplessly at some men who were seated on the bench on the verandah which was provided for used by customers. Twice the mother retraced her steps to reach the child, presumably to lead her by the hand. Twice did the child run back further away from her mother. Eventually the mother, with her face away from the child, called loudly to an imaginary policeman to come. The frightened child ran back towards her mother and they disappeared into the shop.

Mothers confirmed that they genuinely believed that constant fear of something is good for the child since that will safe-guard him from likely harm inflicted by unkind persons or dangerous things. In addition, the fear complex is intended to inculcate respect for persons, ghosts, witchcraft and to keep

the child subject to parental control. Another favourite weapon, used to control the child, is a form of ridicule to appeal to the child's self-esteem and it is also commonly used to encourage the child to emulate his older companions who are regarded as good models.

Informants reported that their children had developed fears for men, for animals such as a cat, horse and so on. Fear for men may be associated with the prevalent fact that, for the better part of the lives of under-fives in Lesotho, the fathers in most homes are far away at work in distant places. 'Makhotso (24 years) has a child of two-and-a-half years who, she reported, cried whenever a male stranger approached the home. She thought that the child behaved that way because her husband has been away for "such a long time" and his child, literally does not know him.

Role of the Father

Sixty percent of the mothers reported the absence from home of employed fathers in the neighbouring country. The remaining forty percent are either widowed, deserted, past child-bearing or have husbands employed in Lesotho. Available statistics show that for the period January to September 1967, about 53,877 Basotho from all over Lesotho were employed in the mines. In the same period 6,599 Basotho from Teyateyaneng area in the Berea District were in the South African mines. The overall number of Basotho who work in the Republic of South Africa

(including the mines) is 200,000 according to a survey by the "Star's Africa News Service".

Data on the differences in child-rearing that may be related to the absence of father who works for long spells away from home were not seriously sought. Responses to the only question, whether the father does play a pronounced role in the rearing of the child under five, were mostly negative - save in two instances - where informants each reported that they suffered chronic ill-health and that their husbands assisted greatly in caring for the children.

A Mosotho man is not expected to assist positively with the upbringing of a child at this stage. He enters into a male child's life during the middle childhood period when he becomes almost his chief mentor and guide. 'Mampe (46 years) had confessed that she was unfamiliar with Sesotho customs and that she had therefore adopted foreign child-rearing practices. In reply to the question whether her husband did in practice assist with the children before their fifth year of age she exclaimed, "No, Khotso never did. He is a real Mosotho".

Findings that have been arrived at suggest the fact that there is no substantial difference between the home where the father is absent and one in which he is physically present as far as the rearing of a child up to five is concerned. According to strict Sesotho tradition, a father may not enter the hut in which the nursing mother and the new infant sojourn, before

three months have expired. A more recent departure from the pattern is to allow him to have a glance at the face of the infant from a safe distance. The reason that was expounded is that a father's movements are not restricted, by tradition. This freedom brings him into contact with all sorts of persons. Contact is associated with malevolent persons whose personal charms and medicines may be transmitted to the frail infant by the father. The child will be 'weighted down' (ho hateha) and thus his life exposed to jeopardy.

The role of a father at this level of growing up is that of an authoritarian figure, mention of whose very name inspires awe into the young one. He learns to view his father from a distance. The father does not freely communicate with the child save in a case when he reprimands him for a misdemeanour. The mother knows she can always use his name when her control of the child(ren) seems to go out of hand.

Basotho are patrilineal. Castle's words that follow are appropriate. "The father has to appear in their minds as an authoritanian figure, the judge of conduct and dispenser of punishment. In their daily life they see him as master of their mother whose submission is an accepted part of an unequal partnership". 'Unequal partnership' is best explained in the words of Duncan who writes, "Traditionally the position of women throughout their lives is that of minor children. Before they are married they are children of their fathers; after their marriage they are the children of their husbands and

during their widowhood, they are the children of their heirs".

The father image is essential and this fact may also be an explanation for the practice by Basotho mothers of using adult males as bogeys to frighten children. It is the police 'man', the European 'man' or Mosotho 'man'.(ntate) that is called to dispense punishment. It may not be a far-fetched idea to conjecture that in most families the children are more relaxed when the father is absent.

In summing this period of training and the methods of discipline that are used, it may be correct to state that the training patterns seem to be a continuation of the feelings of anxiety about the safety of the child. To develop the fear complex in the child,is, in another way, intended to keep him safe from the 'evil' outside world. Use of fear is regarded as being more profitable than use of praise and reward. The uppermost desire of the mother is that the child must show respect for his elders.

Prevalent psychological concepts are: "that adequate rapport must exist between parents and child so that the child feels sufficiently loved by his parents to make him feel the need for (to find meaning in) socialisation training and learning; and that a consistent mode of training must be adopted which is based more on the positive approach of praise and reward than on the negative one of punishment". Psychological investigations focus attention on "the subtle and basic triangularity which

exists (from a child's point of view) between a child and both his parents, a relationship which is subjected to constant frustrations among all concerned, be it through the arrival of other siblings or through each member of the triad failing to respond appropriately to the other's needs and failing to learn and to become conditioned to a multitude of situations throughout a life time within a cultural and subcultural setting".

The Role of the Maternal Uncle (Malome)

A significant feature in the life of the Mosotho child is that which the maternal uncle may be expected to play. One informant summed it all in these words: "He is the key to the door that leads to the child's well-being and future welfare". Certain important rituals concerning the nephew or niece may, by tradition, only be performed by him. A few examples may better illustrate this cultural concept.

The tuft of hair at the back of the head of a child who is born after many before him have died, may only be cut by the maternal uncle when the child is being weaned. A beast has to be sacrificed at his home. Should a child experience pain inflicted by some object, he is exhorted to face his "uncle's place" for the pain to disappear. If a child suffers chronic ill-health despite treatment, the last known person to resort to is his uncle. He is the person to know whether the all-important rituals earlier in the child's life have been carried

out. If the child is stricken with serious illness, the uncle does not enter the building where the young patient is. To do so would mean that he is giving the green light and the child might therefore die.

'Mantati (63 years) related how her ex-civil servant husband once rid his nephew of a chronic attack of ringworms. All that he had done was to rub the child's head with butter fat.

Physical Care

The salient features for the physical care of this age group are few because it is regarded as of minor importance. The children eat with the family just what they eat--the traditional diet of stiff porridge with wild spinach or with meat or with milk. They play outside the yard close to the homes mostly making their own toys from whatever is offering - stones, sand, clay, rags, broken glass etc. Bed time is variable. There is no routine about meal times or sleeping times. The children receive their food when it is convenient for the mother and they learn to wait her convenience.

The three to five-year old child may be sent on errands to neighbouring homes. One informant sent a grand-daughter to borrow snuff from a neighbour. The little boy learns to follow the small animals in the neighbourhood. The purpose in sending the child on errands is to inculcate a sense of obedience and to eliminate selfishness. Adult members of kin are more indulgent to the children than their natural parents. The

mother does not complain because she knows that by tradition "no woman can own or have a child". A child belongs to his father and other paternal kin.

The status of the child after weaning is in a way a most inferior one. He is no longer the infant over whom adults and siblings indulge. He is at the beck and call of everyone around. His impulsive activities are restrained by a scolding or a threat of force. He has few rights and privileges that are respected. He will show beginnings of new behaviour patterns in his learning of simple tasks and his orientation toward other children with whom he is forced to interact. Conditions are set for him. For an example, he may not call any senior associates by their first names without the appellation 'Big brother' or Big sister'. Aggression towards elders is discouraged from childhood and the child begins to learn to conform because he looks up to his elders for guidance as to what they regard for him to be wrong or right. His whole life revolves round personal relations and he is guarded and controlled by his elders.

CHAPTER 6

CHANGE AND STABILITY IN CHILD-REARING

The Sesotho child-rearing practices are unformulated and undocumented. Certain cultural themes involved in the socialisation process reveal a considerable amount of consistency.

The mother's role is that of a cultural agent. The culture is evidenced in her personality and will later emit itself in the personality of the child. In turn, personality has a causal influence on the child's educability - his abilities to achieve, to think or to form human relations.

Traditional practices may vary slightly according to different clans, but, basically, the old Sesotho tradition stresses passivity, dependence and lassitude in childhood. The hard core of the culture will not change unless there is an impressive change in the cultural media namely the women folk - the mothers and mothers-in-law. Both groups are virtually the perpetuators of Sesotho culture for this stage of growing up. 'Makutlo (50 years) stated that although most young women in the Teyateyaneng area fully well know the benefits of institutions such as hospitals and clinics in the birth and rearing of children, many put greater emphasis and preference on situations that allow for the practice of customs. More than a third of my informants preferred home confinement for childbirth because they claim they wanted to observe customs. With a mother-in-law alive, observation of customs becomes

almost imperative especially with the first-born child. Inherent fear still seems to exist for the safety of the child if traditional practices have, for some reason or other, been discontinued.

Two of the informants stated that some of the customs connected with child-rearing had been discontinued by their in-laws because they were not only laborious but were economically demanding. Important events and stages in the child's life require obligatory sacrifices. In these modern times, the sacrifices may be anything from a fowl to a fully-grown ox - depending on how sophisticated or affluent the family involved is. An unlimited number of guests are expected to share in the feasting.

The Educated Mothers and Traditional Child-Rearing Practice

Material has been collected from interviews with educated mothers with the intention to illustrate whether any change in the system of pre-school child-rearing has come about due to to the spread of education or due to other factors. Educated mothers in the sample have had three years of post-primary schooling.

'Mampe (46 years) stressed that she was unfamiliar with traditional child-rearing practices. Her step mother-in-law had not insisted on the observation of customs and that she did not think that her husband would have agreed to observing them in any case. In the course of interview she revealed: that she

had to report to her parents-in-law that she had conceived her first child; that her father-in-law named the first-born; that an animal was slaughtered for the traditional thank-offering feast (pitiki); that all her five sons were born in the Maseru hospital because "I wanted to be near my own mother"; that she sometimes wondered if she is not unlucky because she had not observed her husband's customs.

'Mateboho (60 years) stated that Basotho mother in the Teyateyaneng area are discontinuing most child-rearing practices. Mothers who were, traditionally, the custodians of customs found that their daughters-in-law passively resisted their interference in the rearing of their children. Most young mothers found some of the tribal customs cumbersome. She however pointed out the obligatory sacrifices of animals for the thanks-offering (pitiki) feast was largely observed but in a different context associated with religion.

She gave an example of the manner in which weaning of a child is commonly done by letter from fathers who work in the Republic of South Africa (not in the mines). A young father merely writes to his mother to 'tell' her to wean the baby and release its mother so that she may go to visit him.

'Mamohlomi (27 years) regretted that her training to the Basutoland Primary Teachers' Certificate (B.P.T.C.) level, limited her aspirations to rear her children in a non-Sesotho way. Mention must be made of the fact that this home seemed to be most acculturated in comparison with all other homes.

During the interview, her five-year old boy played quietly in a corner of the room. He climbed on the arm-chair in order to put his toy measuring-tape against the wall. At no time did a word of reproval or rebuke come from his mother. The child was quiet and caused no disturbance whatsoever. He went about his business nonchalantly and unassumingly. Modern toys and playthings were evident outside this home in particular.

The mother revealed that they (the parents) try to share their lives with the children and to create a relaxed and permissive home atmosphere for the two children. She added that her husband was much concerned with the upbringing and welfare of the children and that he set aside some time each evening to play with them.

'Mamohlomi reported that she weaned her infants at the age of six months. She did not seek her mother-in-law's consent in this matter but showed her respect and consideration by letting her know beforehand. They did observe the pitiki feast (in the Christian concept). Her parents-in-law have the prerogative to give the children their Sesotho names and the parents gave the English names. 'Mamohlomi said that she toilet-trained her infants at ten months.

'Mapula (33 years) said that she likes children and that she desires to have a minimum of six. She regarded them as an investment for the future. She has five daughters of ages ranging from two months to seven years. The third daughter lives with her mother. She said that she rears her children in

both Sesotho and non-Sesotho ways.

She listed some of the traditional practices connected with child birth which she observed, namely: taking the newly-born infant to a crossroads to have his head crossed so that he may be fortified against eveil persons, charms and medicines; burying the navel cord near the doorway; sacrificing a beast as thanks-offering. 'Mapula is a working mother who has an employed adult caretaker. Her infant is breast-fed on demand but she observes the rhythms that the child has created. During her absence at work, the infant is fed on processed food instead of the traditional motoho. She takes an enamelled can of liquid porridge (lesheleshele) to work in order to keep her quantity of breast milk sufficient.

'Mapula's three-year old daughter entered the room in which the interview went on, on three separate occasions and her mother repeatedly carried her out. In the end she was given a bottle of food to pacify her. She leaned against her mother as she suckled herself to sleep. Before she could undertake a journey with an infant, she has to fortify her. She believes that this is necessary to protect her child from strangers who may have harmful charms and medicines. She uses a Dutch medicine - stuip druppels - an anti-convulsion mixture which is applied externally. Less sophosticated Basotho mothers use dust from the tyres of the vehicle to mark the forehead of the infant. Grease from the vehicle is also known to be used. These measures are intended to protect the infant. In response to a question

on toilet training this mother naively said, "'me, my infants use napkins".

Homes

The homes with educated mothers differ from the homes of the rest of the sample. These homes constitute one third of the sample. Homes of the former group contained necessities with few or no extras. The homes of the latter group contained hardly the barest necessities. Another variation is that homes of the educated mothers consist of at least three adjoining rooms whereas the homes of uneducated mothers were, at best, one-roomed buildings constructed separately. The traditional courtyard (lebala) characterised all the homes that were visited. An out-door toilet existed in the 'educated' homes whereas the 'uneducated' homes had no toilet arrangements at all. All informants owned their homes. Home ownership, however, seems to have been achieved at the cost of low living standards and in some cases a curtailment of an advanced education.

Attention may be focussed on the actual child training methods employed by educated mothers. Basically, there seems to be very little difference between the rearing methods for pre-school children used by the uneducated mothers and those used by the educated group. There is an awareness which pervades the socialisation in the first five years of the child's life. A cross-section of the data covering the rearing practices of the educated group of mothers may shed more light on this

aspect of the study.

Each informant expressed her deep concern for the safety and welfare of the child. Hence the obligatory sacrifices which custom demands are definitely carried out. The traditional thanks-offering feast after the arrival of a new baby is commonly observed. All mothers accepted breast-feeding on demand by the day and night. One informant claimed that she was sickly and therefore has had to breast-feed her babies for a period of three moths only.

Weaning time varies from three moths (in one instance of a chronically sick mother) to the traditional minimum period of two years. Informants revealed that they sought mother-in-law consent or goodwill in connection with weaning their infants. Despite the fact that none of the younger mothers lived with in-laws, their mothers-in-law continued to have control - no matter how remote. Weaning is abrupt on the day specified for the purpose by the mother-in-law or the husband.

Most educated mothers are in employment and have adult care-takers of necessity. Preference is for distant members of kin. Supplementary food for the infants is <u>motoho</u> (sorghum gruel) in the earlier months and later, processed baby foods.

All mothers, save one, reported that they did not reason with their children. They consistently emphasised that they wanted their children to have good manners. Hence, rearing is geared to cultivate good manners, fear and respect for older persons. Fear and respect are regarded as synonymous terms. General

indifference to responding to child questions was admitted. Mother-child verbal interaction is limited largely to language development. 'Mabaholo said she regarded herself as fortunate because her children are shy and do not normally talk much.

Child fears that were commonly mentioned by mothers are: fear of darkness, strange people and animals. Only one mother in this group stated that she did not threaten her child with a bogeyman. Fear technique is intended to keep children compliant and passive.

Most fathers and husbands in this group are employed in the Civil Service. They own homes in Teyateyaneng. The homes are bases for their families to live in and the fathers live away from home - all over Lesotho. The father may come home over the weekends or month-ends depending on how far from Teyateyaneng he is stationed. This seeming form of self-imposed migratory work is striking and may be regarded as the norm.

Data collected make it plausible to hypothesize that the education of the mother has contributed no substantial difference in the general system of child-rearing. Children still seem to be reared to fit somewhere into the Sesotho cultural norm. The hypothesis may be attributable to the following factors: (1) that the present generation of mothers have themselves been reared in homes in which cultural practices were strictly observed by mothers with lower educational backgrounds; (2) the rurality of the Teyateyaneng area is a representative setting

for tribal society and for the conscious or unconsous continuity of traditional practices aimed at conformity to societal norms; (3) the type of education the mothers have had. One informant, who is a teacher, stressed that she strictly observed the ho jesoa ceremony observed to licence the infant to eat solid food.

An incident which unfolded itself in the writer's presence may have a significant bearing on the point at issue. Towards the end of the interview with the last-mentioned informant, she brought out her two-month old infant from the adjoining room. As she was feeding him, a male relative who is a retired civil servant from neighbouring Maseru entered the room. Evidently he was seeing the baby for the first time for, as he took it into his arms, he rather consciously remarked in a stage whisper "Rona re makhooa" (we are civilised). This uncalled for remark gave the impression that he was quite conscious of the Sesotho custom regarding men, nursing mothers and babies under three months of age. A recapitulation is that, traditionally, no man may enter a home with a mother and new baby before three months have elapsed.

As the writer walked out of the house together with the informant and her visitor who still held the infant, he asked the mother if the child was 'allowed' out. This question stems from the custom in relation to the period when the infant may be taken out of the hut.

In two instances did educated informants state that some of the customs related to child-rearing were cumbersome and that

they interfered with a working mother's way of life. Secondly, once a custom has been practised, it may not be discontinued on impulse without offending the ancestral spirits or the gods. To offend the ancestors is a serious fault and may lead to family disaster - a retaliatory measure imposed by the gods. A ceremonial feast must accompany the renouncement of the custom by the particular family or clan.

Oral System

The pre-weaning period in the life of the infant is characterised by a direct simple gratification. Tradition decides the age of weaning. The minimum age is two years. An exception occurs in the weaning of a child who is born after the death of a previous child(ren). Here tradition has set weaning time at one-and-a-half years of age.

Oral gratification continues in spite of weaning in that the child is fed on solid foods. The abrupt weaning process causes much frustration especially as detachment from the breast is associated with a practice of general withdrawal by the mother. An intense separation-anxiety may arise if maternal deprivation is accomplished by actual geographical separation in instances where the child goes to live with relatives.

Another form of deprivation may occur through insufficient interaction between child and mother at home. The child's infancy behaviour is shattered. He has to learn new behaviour

patterns and orientation towards other children with whom he has to interact. Experiences with peers and with older siblings help to further socialisation. The mother and older siblings supervise and control any signs of aggressive behaviour.

Data seem to indicate that it would be incorrect to hypothesize that Sesotho child-rearing patterns are unstable. Change has set in but such change as has set in is superficial because hard cores of Sesotho culture continue to have a firm grip. These may be listed as: fear for the safety of the child; fear of witchcraft and evil influences; the bond of extended kinship; the authority of older women in child-rearing patterns; the status of women as custodians or guardians of customs; the inclination of Basotho men to regard their mothers' influence in their homes as an essential facet of life; and finally, the tendency to conform to family, tribal and societal norms. Conformity is a discipline which does not offer a threat to cultural change.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this chapter an attempt will be made to sum up the information that has been collected and show that at the end of the first five years the child has gone through the first stage of the socialisation process.

After the weaning stage, the child learns gradually to know that he is expected to be seen and not to be heard. The general attitude of mothers is that whilst a child is quiet and keeps still, he is allowed to remain with adults. But as soon as he becomes fidgety or speaks, he becomes a nuisance and has to be sent outside.

Discipline is not severe in the first five years but it borders on being capricious. There is no clear consistent pattern with regard to moral training. The moral training that is exercised is based on particular practices in particular situations. The child learns to size the moods of the parents. Wrong or right will depend on the views of the people surrounding his self. On the other hand, the child is disciplined and controlled by use of threats of force and of bogeys.

The child learns language by the direct method. By quiet encouragement and correction, his language develops. Mother-child interaction is limited otherwise. The mother is involved with her domestic chores and there is the fear that verbal activity may lead to precociousness and disobedience. It may

be said that after the weaning there is not such a strong mother-child tie. The mother does not commit herself to any one child and once infancy is past, the child becomes one of a group of children. The days of undivided attention for the child cease and he no longer has sole sway over his mother. Side by side with other older siblings in the home, he learns to play his part in the home chores.

The mental picture that may be drawn of the child at five years is one of a shy, quiet person. He may seem independent and self-sufficient, but these could be associated with experiences after the weaning period. Security feelings, according to prevalent psychological concepts, can only be established in a situation in which the child receives continued satisfaction of love needs by both parents. Calmness and poise are ascriptions that cannot be based on the foundations of frustration and mental trauma that follow the abrupt unmistakeable weaning practice that the child has to experience.

The child learns that good behaviour means any behaviour that will not disturb adult activity. At five years, the child has learnt to be sensitive to the moods of his mother and to the tone of any given situation. He also grows to know, for example, that respect for elders is traditionally shown by 'silent' obedience.

He grows to be cautious and learns to avoid involvement unless he is quite sure of the tone of the given situation. He knows what is expected of him in the traditional setting. Generally,

he will grow to see himself through the eyes of the adults in his life and conform to the views of older people round him.

In ending it may be said, in the words of Whiting, "indulgence in infancy, a large number of nurturing agents and a mild transition from infantile indulgence into childhood will produce a trustful attitude to others, general optimism and sociability".

Basotho, like most traditional societies, are particular about the welfare of pre-school children. The child at this stage of growth and development is not neglected. Taboos, beliefs and traditional practices are observed in order to protect the child physically, emotionally and otherwise.

The obligation of the parent to the child has been seen in these pages to start from the period before birth, during birth and in the post-birth period. It becomes less and less important as the child grows up.

Literature about early childhood tells us that the early years of life are vital to the individual's personality development. The child at this stage is closest to his mother. She is his resource person and rears him for his role in the family, the community and the world at large. With independence in Lesotho, the question regarding child-rearing practices is 'what effects will the changing environment have on child-rearing practices?'.

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GLOSSARY

p. 4 : Ntoa-ea-Majoni - Battle of the Johnny's. Johnny was a much used name by British soldiers. It became a synonym for British soldiers

p. 6 : leshele-shele - traditional soft porridge made of sorghum and water

: lekhalana - aloe plant. Leaves contain a bitter liquid. It is used as a medicine for biliousness or for the washing of hands and bodies of people who are bereaved

p. 7 : thupa - switch, lash

p. 8 : koko - invisible bogey used to discipline young children

p. 9 : lithaka - equals according to status

p. 12 : liepa-meru - herbalists who dig roots for medicinal purposes

: Masione - from 'Zion', the word is often collectively used for all independent religious sects

p. 13 : mojalefa - eldest son in a family. One who inherits the estate including the extended family responsibilities

: Molimo - the Great One

p. 14 & 16 : mohlapiso - a herbal mixture to be taken by expectant mothers to ensure normal growth of foetus.

p. 14 & 24 : koroso - carcass of a sheep specially for the first-born child on his return to his home

p. 19 : lehlaka la metsing - river reed

: mabele - sorghum

p. 20 : thotobolo - ash or rubbish heap for the home

: mokubetso - a medicine burnt at sleeping time to ward off evil spirits

p. 21 : motsoetsi - nursing mother

p. 21 & 30 : mothaleho - applying medicine to the baby's head to prevent the fontanelle from sagging

p. 22 : mehlala - evil trails

p. 23 : letsibolo - first born child. See mojalefa.

p. 23 & 31 : khoeetsa - neckband specially made by the baby's grandmother to be used by successive babies in the particular family before weaning time

p. 24 : thetana - skirt made of leaves

p. 25 : ho hlompha - to respect

p. 26 : pitiki - thanksgiving feast for the women friends who gave assistance when the woman was confined

p. 27 : pitikisoa - to be rolled on the ground

p. 28 : hlohoana - a form of meningitis, the sagging of the fontanelle

p. 29 : motoho - liquid porridge made with sorghum

: lelomolo - baby's first food apart from mother's milk

p. 30 : mothaleho - see above

: seotloana - specially made grass hedge

: pomponyane - an eye ailment

p. 32 : lesika - sinew or ligament from an animal. Used as a thread to sew.

: kuruetso - feast held when the baby is three months old and will be shown the moon

: mohato - medicine for strengthening the baby and making him invulnerable

p. 34 : sesila - bad luck

p. 36 : Ntjanyana - small dog. Name given to baby who comes after one who died

p. 37 : ho jesoa - act of giving first food to the baby

p. 46 : matekoane - dagga, hemp, marijuana

p. 57 : ntáte - man, father

p. 58 : malome - brother of the baby's mother

p. 66 : lebala - space in front of the house

p. 69 : rona re makhooa - literally means 'we are like Europeans'